

## Item 22



# Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:**

Tuesday, June 11, 2013

**Prepared By/Phone Number:**

Deece Eckstein, 854-9754

**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:**

Deece Eckstein, 854-9754

**Commissioners Court Sponsor:**

Judge Biscoe

### AGENDA LANGUAGE:

AT 11:00 A.M.:

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON LEGISLATIVE MATTERS, INCLUDING:

- A. UPDATE ON LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES;
- B. [SJR 2](#), PROPOSING A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSFER OF CERTAIN GENERAL REVENUE TO THE STATE HIGHWAY FUND AND THE ECONOMIC STABILIZATION FUND AND TO AUTHORIZE THE PAYMENT FROM THE STATE HIGHWAY FUND OF THE PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST ON CERTAIN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT BONDS; AND,
- C. ADDITIONS TO THE PRIORITIES, POLICY POSITIONS AND THE POSITIONS ON OTHER PROPOSALS SECTIONS OF THE TRAVIS COUNTY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA.

### SUMMARY AND IGR COORDINATOR RECOMMENDATION:

IGR recommends that the Court approve and execute a letter to Governor Perry asking that the call of the special session be opened to include transportation funding issues.

### BACKGROUND:

- 1) The House and Senate redistricting committees have scheduled field hearings around the state. The goal is to create a record of public input for the maps adopted during the special session. The schedule of committee hearings for, respectively, the [House](#) and [Senate](#) committees are linked.
- 2) The full Senate will meet again on Wednesday, June 12. The full House will meet again on Monday, June 17.

- 3) As of Thursday, June 6, no other topics have been added to the call.
- 4) There are 13 days remaining in the session.

### **ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

Under current law, 25% of oil and gas production (“severance”) taxes are transferred to general revenue, where they are dedicated to public education, and the remaining 75% goes to the economic stabilization fund (or Rainy Day Fund).

SJR 2 would change the distribution of these taxes and allow the portion that traditionally has gone to the economic stabilization fund to be split evenly between it and Fund 6, the state highway fund. The remaining 25% would continue going to general revenue.

The funds deposited into the state highway fund could then be appropriated to paying down the principal and interest on bonds issued by the Texas Department of Transportation.

In addition to SJR 2, HJR 9 and HJR 12 have been filed in the House. [HJR 9](#) is the House companion to SJR 2 and [HJR 12](#) is nearly identical. Currently, no enabling legislation for these constitutional amendments has been filed in either the House or the Senate.

The Commissioners Court “supports increased funding for the Texas Department of Transportation for transportation and other mobility needs, including rail and mass transit.” Consistent with that position, IGR recommends that the Court approve and execute the proposed letter to the legislative leadership.

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:** Not applicable.

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:** None.

**NAMES, PHONE NUMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF PERSONS WHO MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY OR BE INVOLVED WITH THIS REQUEST:**

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Conference of Urban Counties, letter to Governor Perry re SJR 2, May 30, 2013.

# Urban Counties

May 30, 2013

**Chairman**

Commissioner  
Eddie Arnold  
*Jefferson County*

**Chair Elect**

Commissioner  
Bobbie Mitchell  
*Denton County*

**Immediate Past Chair**

Commissioner  
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**Vice-Chairmen**

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Judge Veronica Escobar  
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Comm. Fred Nardini  
*San Patricio County*

Judge Glen Whitley  
*Tarrant County*

Judge Dan Gattis  
*Williamson County*

Comm. Kevin Burns  
*Wise County*

**Executive Director**

Donald Lee

**Member Counties**

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*Brazoria ~ Brazos*

*Cameron ~ Chambers*

*Collin ~ Comal*

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*Ector ~ El Paso*

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*Hays ~ Hidalgo*

*Hunt ~ Jefferson*

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*Lubbock ~ McLennan*

*Midland ~ Nueces*

*Randall ~ Rockwall*

*San Patricio ~ Smith*

*Tarrant ~ Travis*

*Webb ~ Williamson*

*Wise*

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Honorable Rick Perry  
Texas Governor  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

**Re: Support for Addressing Transportation Funding in Special Session with SJR 2**

Dear Governor Perry:

While the 83<sup>rd</sup> Regular Session of the Legislature was in many ways successful, county officials cannot ignore the looming crisis in transportation funding and the fact no meaningful progress was made towards a solution thereof. Now, a reasonable, effective, and broadly supported idea has been proposed that will help. The Texas Conference of Urban Counties respectfully requests the expansion of the call of the legislature to include passage of SJR 2 by Nichols.

SJR 2 will allocate one-half of the revenue currently flowing into the Rainy Day Fund to the Highway fund. While not wholly addressing the transportation needs of the State it will make significant progress towards the widely acknowledged shortfall in highway funding that we face.

Failure to adopt any measure in the face of the looming crisis in highway construction and maintenance funding will be a significant failure for our State. Given the economic consequences of slowing our effort to expand highways, this failure will likely be the defining legacy of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature.

Our metropolitan areas are booming with economic growth that will be stunted without our continued investment in the infrastructure necessary to keep us all moving. Urban Counties are struggling to provide local matching funds and continue building and maintaining county roads. There is no way counties will be able to make up any meaningful part of the shortfall. Communities will be forced to choose between more local debt to move projects forward or crushing congestion that harms both business productivity and quality-of-life.

Please complete the positive legacy of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislature and allow the legislature to address transportation funding in special session with SJR 2.

Sincerely,



Donald Lee  
Executive Director

Cc: Urban County Commissioners Courts  
Texas Legislature